

HOUSE RESOLUTION 195

By Hardaway

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate Reverend Samuel Billy Kyles on the occasion of his 50th anniversary as pastor of Monumental Baptist Church in Memphis.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should honor those individuals who have answered a divine call to the ministry and who have served with dedication, vigor, and enthusiasm to perform God's work for their congregations and their communities; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Samuel Billy Kyles is one such stalwart servant of the Lord, who has faithfully served as the pastor of Monumental Baptist Church in Memphis for fifty years; and

WHEREAS, in 1959, the Reverend Kyles moved from Chicago to pastor the newly-established Monumental Baptist Church, becoming at the age of twenty-four the faithful shepherd of a loving congregation; to this day, Reverend Kyles remains the only pastor in the church's history; and

WHEREAS, possessed of a passion for social justice, Reverend Kyles became a forceful presence in the then-segregated South; and

WHEREAS, he joined the Memphis branch of the NAACP and became a strategist in the struggle for civil rights; an impassioned trailblazer, he and Mrs. Kyles were among a small number of African-American parents who attempted to enroll their children in a segregated school in 1961 and, two years later, he was arrested for attempting to desegregate the Memphis city bus system by sitting in the designated white section; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Kyles worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to plan rallies and marches in support of the Memphis sanitation workers who were on strike for human

equality, and he was with Dr. King during the precious last hour of his life, talking "preacher talk" with the martyr of the Civil Rights Movement; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Kyles is a founding national board member of People United to Serve Humanity (PUSH), is a current national board and executive committee member of Rainbow Coalition/PUSH, stood as Executive Director of Rainbow Coalition/PUSH-Memphis, rendered sterling service as the executive producer of the Rainbow Coalition/PUSH weekly radio broadcast for more than thirty years, gained appointment to the Clinton Administration's Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad, sat as a panelist at the 1998 White House Conference on Hate Crimes, serves as a member of the National Civil Rights Museum Board of Directors, is a member of the Tennessee Judicial Selection Committee, is a member of the Memphis Council for International Visitors, serves as a member of the Tennessee Human Rights Commission, distinguishes himself through his membership on the Tennessee Advisory Committee of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, and proudly serves as Chairman of the Center for African-American Archival Preservation Board; and

WHEREAS, in recognition for his many years of service to the betterment of mankind, Reverend Kyles has received numerous awards and honors, including the 1992 Tennessee Living Legend Award, the 2000 City of Memphis Humanitarian Award, recognition in 2008 by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee during Black History Month, the Humanitarian Award from Diversity Memphis in 2009 for his achievements in making Memphis an improved community, and the Living Legend Award from the Ford Foundation in 2009; and

WHEREAS, a highly-regarded speaker, the Reverend Samuel Kyles has addressed numerous groups and organizations, both in the United States and abroad, speaking to the Department of Justice, the Labor Department, Northwestern University, Cornell University, the South African Council of Churches, the Society of Black Lawyers, Deutschlandfunk Radio, and the 2000 Democratic National Convention, for which he was chosen to deliver the closing prayer; and

WHEREAS, a firm believer in importance of religious education, he is a member of the World Baptist Alliance, a member of and regular program participant in the Progressive National

Baptist Convention (PNBC), a former instructor at the National Training Congress of the PNBC, and a former member of the Morehouse School of Religion's Board of Directors; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Kyles has also dedicated a great deal of his valuable time and tireless energy in support of human rights and economic development in Africa, participating on the American Committee on Africa, standing as a delegate to the African/African-American Summit for ten years, and serving as a delegate to the African National Congress' 1993 International Solidarity Conference in South Africa; and

WHEREAS, also active in political and community service, Reverend Samuel Kyles served as a national coordinator for the 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns of the Reverend Jesse Jackson, was a member of the 1996 National Advisory Committee to Re-elect Clinton/Gore, and served as Executive Chairman of the Justice for Congressman Harold Ford, Sr., Committee; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Kyles has also appeared on the television documentaries *Who Shot Martin Luther King?*, *At the River I Stand*, *The Trial of James Earl Ray*, *The Last Days of King*, and *The Century*, and is revered as a resource of information on the Civil Rights Movement; and

WHEREAS, his many professional accomplishments aside, he is perhaps most appreciative of the love and support he shares with his wife, Aurelia Kennedy Kyles, and his five children; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Kyles exemplifies the spirit and allegiance to family and community that are characteristic of a true Tennessean; and

WHEREAS, throughout his estimable career as a religious leader and humble servant of God, Reverend Kyles has demonstrated the utmost compassion, ability, and integrity, winning the unbridled respect and admiration of his friends, his family, and the many and diverse members of his congregation at Monumental Baptist Church; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we extend to the Reverend Samuel Billy Kyles our heartfelt congratulations as he celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of his vibrant pastorate at Monumental Baptist Church, commend him for his many

years of honorable service and spiritual inspiration to his congregation, the City of Memphis, these United States, and the entire world, and wish him every continued success in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.